

**Robert Farr, Attorney at Law  
90 Whiting Lane  
West Hartford, Connecticut 06119**

**Testimony of Robert Farr in support of passage of HB 5578: An Act Concerning  
the Recommendation of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect  
to the Sexual Offender Registry.**

**March 26, 2018**

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, Representative Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Robert Farr and I am a member of the Sentencing Commission. I am a former Legislator and past Chairman of the Parole Board. I serve as co-chairman of the Subcommittee of the Sentencing Commission which evaluated the sentencing laws concerning sex offenders with a focus on the Sex Offender Registry.

The bill before you makes major changes in the Registry to make it more focused and useful. It should reduce recidivism by moving from a conviction-based registry to a risk-based registry, thus lessening the number of low risk offenders on the Registry. And it will encourage all offenders to work to reduce their risk factors. It will reduce the number of low-risk offenders on the Public Registry so that law enforcement can focus on the high-risk offenders.

Connecticut's current Statewide Sex Offender Registry was established in 1998, but reached back 10 years, requiring anyone convicted of a sex crime, after 1988 to be registered. Those pre-registry offenders had no opportunity for a hearing as to whether they should be so included because there was no sex offender registry at that time.

An earlier version of the registry in 1994 imposed a one-year registration. That was changed to 10 years, then it was changed to require either 10 years or lifetime registration, based upon the offence that the offender was convicted of. Presently, for less serious sex offenses, required registration is for 10 years, and

for more serious ones, registration is for life. There is presently no way to terminate a lifetime registration or to shorten the time on the ten-year Registry.

When the Public Registry first started there were less than 600 individuals on it. There are now over 5,300 registered sex offenders. The Public Registry is accessible to the public on the Internet. It lists the name, address, and picture of any registered sex offender living within 2500 feet of one's house, or all those living in one's town, or any registered offender in the state. The current public registry has no reward for a registrant's appropriate behavior and no sanction for a registrant's inappropriate behavior, other than a failure to report a change of address, which is a class D felony.

The current Public Registry contains too many names to be functional. Virtually every town in the state has a registered sex offender and the big cities have hundreds. For instance, the city of Hartford has over 700 registered sex offenders.

The problem with the Public Registry is that it doesn't differentiate between low-risk offenders and high-risk offenders. It is estimated that there are over 800 offenders who are on the Registry for crimes committed over 30 years ago. The other problem with the Registry is that there is no way to get off the 10-year Registry early, and no way to ever get off the lifetime Registry. This means that if a registered offender committed a crime 30 years ago and has gone back to school, is now working, has a family and is drug-free, he is nonetheless treated the same way as a registered offender who never gets his act together and continues to do crimes, use drugs and is not a stable member of the community.

This proposed bill has three types of registration. They are 10 years, 20 years, or life. The length of the registration will be determined by a new Sex Offender Board, based on the risk of reoffending. All convicted sex offenders will be classified as low-risk, medium-risk, or high-risk. Having the risk determined by a Board will cut both ways. Some high-risk offenders will end up with longer terms on the Registry and be denied motions to shorten their term. While some low-risk offenders may be put on the Law-Enforcement-Only Registry. Offenders will be able to shorten their registration by demonstrating that they have taken action to reduce their risk to the community.

All the states around Connecticut including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey have moved towards a risk-based Registry similar to what is proposed in this bill.

Most states allow offenders to petition for early termination of registration which is also part of this proposal.

In addition, this bill separates the existing Registry into a Public Registry and a Law-Enforcement-Only Registry. All registrants will be in the Law Enforcement Only Registry so that police know where sex offenders live in their community. The Public Registry will only contain high-risk offenders. One of the reasons for excluding low-risk offenders from the Public Registry is that it's been shown that it is difficult for those offenders to obtain housing and employment, and those living without are five times more likely to reoffend than those with housing and employment.

Passage of this bill will make the sex offender registry a more focused and rational tool to reduce the likelihood of offenders committing new crimes with more tragic and life-altering effects on victims.

Sex Offender Registry Testimony in Support of passage of bill 5578.